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CAMPBELL, LANDA WILEY.
VIGNETTE OF PIONEER DAYS IN
INDIANA

VIGNETTE OF PIONEER DAYS IN INDIANA

written in 1942

By

LANDA WILEY CAMPBELL

While living with his son

Paul R. Campbell

in Lynden, Washington

"SON REMEMBER" Luke 16:25

Two things stand out prominently in life, memory and time. Memory does not die and time does not move. Everything else moves, but time and memory stay. We move, governments move, people move, but time abides.

Two things stand out on the walls of time. The scientist looks into the face of a little babe and asks, "Where did he come from?" The theologian peers into the open tomb and asks, "Where has he gone?" and receives the echo of a wailing cry for an answer.

In Isaiah 57:15 it speaks of "God as the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity". So, time is the home of God.

Time commenced with us one cold February morning, February 5th, 1863, just about at the half way mark of the Civil War. It was on in all its terror. I was on hand when the shackles dropped from four and a half million slaves. Is it possible at this date, that my own U.S.A. was half slave? But the rainbow of freedom was to rise shortly and rest upon the clouds of war.

Dear old Daddy was drafted about this time. We lived in a one-room log cabin with not a neighbor in sight. A half mile away the cabin could not be seen for the woods and thick underbrush. My older sister had died while we lived in Fayette County on the Ohio River. My younger sister, Hettie, was ten years of age at that time. Father came into this new place with all his worldly goods in a one-horse wagon. There was not a foot of land cleared.

The first thing to write itself on my mind was going out at the back door and across the lot to a pair of bars, and there I poked my little pink sun-bonnet through the fence to a colt. The colt took it, chewed it up, and so far as I know, swallowed it. The next thing I remember was sitting on Mother's lap and looking out on a sheet of water. About this time I was taken with lung fever and came near dying. This I do not remember except as it was related to me later. Old Doctor Parks said, "If he pulls through until morning, he'll likely get well". Needless to say I pulled through and am here yet. After this, I had erysipelas. It left a scar on my neck which is there to this day. They burned my head with nitrate of silver which turned my hair white. Half of my head was black as coal and the other half white.

About this time, Father was drafted in the Union army. (War is a dirty thing.) I do not know just how it all happened, but a man

by the name of Harrison Sparrow offered to go in Father's place. I believe he was a single man. His noble offer was accepted.

As already stated, we lived in a one room cabin. I am not sure if the floors were puncheon, but lots of the houses did have puncheon floors. Puncheon floors were made by splitting logs as thin as they could and laying these slabs on the ground. (It was not sanded.) Then they would adz off a little, but at best it was pretty rough. I don't know how high heels would have made it then. Father bought brick from the Buckmans and made a fireplace. A crane would swing around over the fire, with a kettle on it and dear old Mother would cook with that. The fire-shovel had a handle about three feet long with a knob on the upper end. I remember a little hole in the brick where this knob leaned against the fireplace.

The Indians had been driven out of this section of the country, but a few remained. These few got mad at their chief, old Pashwa. Ephraim Bearass hid Pashwa in his corn field. The Indians came and looked in the cornfield but did not find their chief. Sometime later, down near Plymouth, they were digging a well and had Pashwa in the wall working. Someone said, "Pashwa, the Indians are coming." They said he was so scared he would holler and jump straight up until his head would reach the level of the ground. Pashwa's daughter ran away and he went after her with a whip and drove her home. It was a hot day and the whipping and running were too severe and she took the fever and died.

Old Nigo, another Indian, was the homeliest man I have ever seen, I do believe.

Well, the Civil War was drawing to its close. Sherman's march to the sea laid waste a strip of country sixty miles wide and three hundred miles long. This broke the back of the South. Then came the surrender of the South and the war was over, the slaves were free and the government at Washington was preserved.

Father split rails for 62 1/2 cents a hundred. He split lots of the rails that were used in fencing old Davey Gibbons' farm. Some of the finest black walnut and yellow poplar were split into rails. Our farm was fenced with black walnut rails which were there when I left in 1897.

Money was scarce and hard to get. First they had what was called "wildcat" money which was good one day and possibly within a week it was no good.

By this time the railroad had built in and one winter Father moved to Bourbon and bought wood for fuel for the engines. The first tracks were square timbers with strap-iron on top. The blacksmiths got to stealing this strap-iron for wagon tires. Wish you could see the locomotives of those days with their

smokestacks nearly as big as the boiler. It was not long until steel rails came into use. We lived in Bourbon while Father worked there and then moved back to the farm.

Folks did lots of visiting in those days. They would bring in a big spittoon and the men would sit and talk and chew and spit. I would lie on the floor and listen. The ladies would have those spit-boxes to clean.

Father finallly sold our forty acres and bought the John Green Eighty. It was on this place that the first school house was built. It was a log building about five feet high at the ends. It was covered with clapboards which were weighted down with long poles. There were no nails or hinges or latches. Fire shovels and home tools were made by the blacksmith. Almost all we have today has come in my lifetime. Later the carpenter made all his finish flooring which was dressed by hand and matched. Sleepers for the lower joists were logs flattened. The floor was fastened on these by boring a 3/4 inch hole in which a wooden pin was driven and then cut off smooth on the top. I have hewed timber many a day with a broad ax. Some of the cabins just had one log left out up about 2 feet and folks would just slip in and out instead of a door. The chimney was built out of wet clay and sticks laid foursquare and then more mud. Wheat was cradled and bound and then tramped out with horses. Clover seed was threshed the same way with the wind only to blow the chaff away.

From about 1866 frontier life began to change. Father would take the old mare and sled, summer or winter, and go about 4 miles to the Tippecanoe River where there was a a grist mill and a carding mill. The old mare would always get scared when we got to the mill, and Daddy would have a fracas with her.

At the mill was a store where you could get homemade bacon and dried fruit. Crackers came in barrels, also sugar, 296 lbs. to a barrel. Folks would buy 5, 10, or 25 lbs. as they could. We never saw any white sugar until years afterward. Butter was 6 and 8 cents a pound. Overall and jean material came in bolts. The women made these by hand as well as shirts, etc. There were no sewing machines then. Sheep were driven to the creek and washed and then sheared. The wool was then taken to the carding mill and run out in rolls about 18" long and 1 1/4" in diameter. From this carded wool, yarn was spun on a spinning wheel. I would wind the yarn into balls as it came from the wheet. Before the wool went to the carding mill it had to be picked over for burrs and Spanish needles.

Often the women would congregate for a "wool picking". Young folk would meet for an "apple peeling". Often the apple quarters were strung with a needle and placed back of the stove for drying. Women and girls would knit and sew and quilt until late

at night. They sure worked hard, yet they were happy and would sing as they worked. The women would often hang a baby on their arms and knit as they went to a neighbor's place for a call. We chopped our wood with an axe and piled it in the open. Hay was mowed by hand with a scythe. Buckwheat had to be cut when it was wet with dew or it would shatter out. A pen was then built about two feet high across which rails were laid. On these rails the buckwheat was laid and then flailed out, the buckwheat falling between the rails and the wind blowing the chaff away. On certain days we could get it ground. Buckwheat cakes and cane syrup were not bad to take inwardly.

Early in the Fall, Father would take a nail and punch holes in a piece of tin, then turn the tin upside down and use it for a corn grater. Then we would have cornmeal mush for supper. Later we took corn to the mill where it was ground on an old stone burr mill, not bolted as it is now. We would hull walnuts in the Fall, gather hazel nuts and hickory nuts and parch corn and spend our evenings reading.

It was in the Fall of 1871 that Chicago burned almost off the map. That Fall there was fire as far as we could hear. Men would ride by in the night calling for help. They would holler for help as they rode by horseback, "Help, help! I'll burn out before morning if I do not get help."

In those days boots came in boxes, a dozen pair in a box, size 12 on down to boys' sizes. If the right size could not be had, then a larger size would be worn. The boots were all pegged with wooden pegs and, when they got wet and then dry, my, they were a fright.

Lawyers, "sliding" Elders, men of standing, what few there were, wore swallow tailed coats and stovepipe hats. Boys wore what they could get . I never had an overcoat until I was nearly grown. Knit underwear was unknown. I would often sit in school or work all day with feet wet. Overshoes were unknown. The first overshoes I ever saw were made from buffalo hide with the hair inside and hide outside. On Saturday an old stew kettle was inverted, an egg broken on it, then a rag around the fingers rubbed in the white of the egg, then on the kettle, then on the shoes and they were blackened for the Sabbath.

Beds then were about 3' high, with rails on the side in which pegs were driven. From those a rope ran back and forth lengthwise, then crosswise, on which was placed a straw-tick. Later on wood slats took the place of the rope, but no springs. By spring time the straw would get broken fine (that is, if you had a couple of boys) and in the morning the straw would be worked down between the slats and on the camel there would be red patches of hide about the width of the slats. Sometimes if there was too much carousal and Dad got after us, there would be

Bathtubs came into fashion about that time but they were condemned by the New York doctors as being unsanitary. Bless their old hearts, they remain to this day, men after my own heart. When the first railroad was built into Indianapolis, the old settlers said it would take all the trade away from the city and ruin it.

Drug stores were marked with a blue and red light in front of them. On every block there was a policeman who would walk to the end of the block and hit the lamp post with his "billy-club" and then return. Street lights were oil lanterns on a post.

I can remember well when the first buggies came to that country. The dash-board was so high you could just barely see the horses over it.

There were no banks in the country; so, in the absence of a checking system, stock buyers would carry their money in their vest pockets. They would pay $5.00 down and the rest when the stock was delivered. surplus money was kept in a can at home on some shelf in the cupboard and you seldom heard of a robbery.

The first money I ever made was for hauling wood with a yoke of cattle and for which I was paid in paper money of the ten, twenty, twenty-five and fifty cent denominations. I broke two yoke of cattle, one being a yoke of red steers that I could drive anywhere by the word only. They were thoroughly broke and I sure loved them. One day while I was at school, Dad sold them and, when I came home, they were gone. That was the first real sore spot in my young life. Later when Sister got married was another sore spot.

There were spelling schools, literary societies and church to go to. Hunting with a muzzle loading rifle and fishing rounded out the fun program. A 5 cent line and five cents worth of hooks with a pole out from the thicket and we were all set for fishing. No license and no restricted areas and no one got shot accidentally.

The flies were terrible. During threshing time a girl was placed on each side of the table with a leafy bush to shoo the flies away. The first fly catcher was a glass tumbler half full of soapy water and a cardboard cover with a small hole in it for the flies to crawl through. A little honey on the underside of the cardboard did the trick.

It was about 1866 that the Molly Maguires came on the scene. They and the Irish Riflemen killed about 300 folk. Finally the U.S. authorities took it up and had a man join the Molly Maguires in order to get the truth about them. In that way they were broken up. This was about the beginnings of the Mooney and Pinkerton detective agency. Such men as Al Capone and the Barker

gang were not in at the head of the government in those days. We had real men and statesmen for presidents then. Under the keen eyes of those men we never saw an obscene picture or magazine. There were wicked men then but they were not in highest offices. Murderers and thieves fared pretty tough. We seldom heard of divorce. For the most part a man's word was good as his note.

Home life depended on Father and Mother. Their word was law. From the time we were young, when they said "Do this or that", we did it. Never did we think of arguing with them or saying, " I won't do it". When we wanted to go and play with a neighbor, we asked permission and were told how long to stay. If we were not back on time, the next time we did not get to go at all. Parents kept tab on their children and did not let them go to the four winds. I thank God for all the home law of those days. Not that I advocate clubbing all the time for Dad never whipped me more than once, but when Father or Mother said "No", I knew they meant it.

At night we were bothered with mosquitoes and bugs of various kinds. If there had been a nudist colony then, I don't know which would have gotten the worst of it, the nudists or the bugs.

In 1869 the Union Pacific Railroad was built. From 1867 to 1869 the Central Pacific was being built, from Sacramento to Promontory, Utah. The locomotive and rails were shipped by boat around the Horn. Up until this time the stage coach served. The Pony Express which carried the mail from Council Bluffs to California made use of 500 ponies, changing every 20 miles and making the trip in 10 days. There were 10,600 ox teams for freight, as many as 500 wagons passing through Kearney in one day. One company alone used 75,000 oxen. We got all this through the papers and the radio of that day, which was "gossip". One stage line had 100 coaches and 2700 horses and mules for a 1900 mile trip which took 20 days and cost the passengers $225.00 fare. Because of the expense the demand for a railroad was made. Workmen on the railroad had to work with guns handy with which to fight the Indians. At one time the Indians ran a band of ponies in front of a train and wrecked it. At times the trains would be stalled by herds of buffalo on the track with two or three days elapsing before they could be cleared enough for the train to get through. At last the railroads began giving the Indians free rides and that helped to quell them.

At one time some Cheyenne Indians wrecked a train, killed the engineer and fireman, plundered the train and rode off with bolts of bright cloth tied to their horses' tails. In those days neighbors stopped to talk about the building of the railroads like we talk about the war today.

There was no soap on the market in those days. Pork rinds and the winter´s ashes were saved from which the soap was made. Salt added made hard soap.

There were no lead pencils, slates taking their place at school. Our chewing gum we got from tamarack trees.

The girls all learned how to sew and knit. My wife made her own wedding dress. Cooking and baking were not learned from a cookbook. I learned my trade working with Father, not at some school.

The town of Bourbon had nothing but board shacks with the board sidewalks going up and down to suit the store fronts. The town well had to be cleaned of rats and mice every once in a while. Cattle roamed the streets at will. Roads were almost impassable in the spring.

Men settled their differences largely by a "fisty-cuff". A man`s wages could not be garnisheed. Everyone was allowed forty acres, a cow and a year´s provisions that the law could not touch. A horse thief was often hung to a tree. A man could beat his wife if he wanted or he could go off and get drunk and stay that way for days and no one would bother him. A man´s name on the church record was good for credit at the grocery store.

There were families that carried on feuds for year after year. The Dawsons and the Swiharts were terrors to fight.

A few beds, an old bureau, a few split bottom chairs, an up and down churn, a little tin ware, a few brass knives and forks and spoons constituted a household outfit. It was not much but it was precious. Corn hominy, cooked wheat, cornbread, butter and molasses, apple butter, dried apple pie, bread, cookies, old bacon and ham, cherries and wild blackberries about completed the men.

Pioneering a new country was full of hardships, interest and blessing, but much of it was like the Irishman shearing the hog -- lots of noise but not much wool.

But a modern home seems to be more trouble to keep going. In his "Journey To The Peacock Throne" the author says that the Arab women who still grind their corn in a mortar are light hearted and gay. Can you figure it out? I can´t. America plays golf and bridge, struggles for more money and less work, delights in wearing paper caps and blowing tin horns, gets all excited over the "Quints" while the nation plunges into war, and liberty and civilization crumble into dust.

SCHOOL DAYS

I have the first school report about which I ever knew anything, written by Johnston Baldwin and dated 1870. Before this we had not heard of a grade school. We committed a poem a week to memory and sang the multiplication tables and the capitals of the states to the tune of "Yankee Doodle". I haven't forgotten them yet. The school house stood about three feet off the ground, with a door in front and three windows on each side. A heater about four feet long stood in the middle of the room. There was a blackboard at the back with a big whip lying above it. The coats were along the sides with tables in front and a lower row in front of them. The woodpile lay out in the snow. Often the thermometer would reach 15 degrees below. During warmer weather the snow would stick to our feet and pack up under the door until it could not be closed and would stay that way for days. An old cedar wooden bucket and a tin cup supplied water. It would do for two or three winters if someone did not get away with it. Someone would raise his hand and say, "Teacher, may I and _____ go get a pail of water?" Usually it would be a boy and a girl. On the way they could talk. Very few carried a handkerchief. One blew his nose and then wiped it on his coat sleeve until his sleeve became slick. I usually carried a rag. The girls would raise their dresses and wipe their noses on the underside. The toilet was any fence corner down the road and teacher and scholars chose their own corners. The hogs and sheep would get under the building and get into a fight and squeal and bump against the under side of the floor and then we would all laugh. One had to hold up his hand if he wanted somethng. It was , "Teacher, may I go out?" or "Teacher, may I get a drink?" One time it was, "Teacher, Frank is spittin' on me" Teacher - "Frank, were you spittin' on Mickey?" "No Ma'am" said Frank. Teacher - "Mickey, why did you say that?" "Well, well, he was fixin' to" said Mickey. Well, we studied and worked in between times. I went to school to both my father and my sister.

About that time the Greenback Party sprang up advocating that the government print money. So, one day during spelling class, Oliver Martin leaned over to me and said, "Say, have you folks got any geese?" I said, "No, why?" He said, "If you have, send them over to Chicago to pass greenbacks." I laughed out loud and Sister, after my refusal to tell her what I was laughing at, gave me a a sound thrashing, the only one I ever got in school. Sometimes the teacher would make a circle on the blackboard with a dot in the middle and make someone hold his nose against the dot. Such was punishment for whispering or drawing pictures. Oliver Martin and my sister have both long since passed over the Great Divide, but I haven't forgotten that licking.

A large ash tree stood in the school yard where the sheep and we played together. One day under that tree I told Bell Armantrout

that I would give her a big red apple if she would let me kiss her. My sister heard about it and I never heard the last of that. Wish I knew if Bell is still living. I'd write and ask her if she remembers it.

Sometimes we would get busy picking flowers or climbing trees and forget what time it was. There were no bells except a little hand bell, and Father just tapped on the wall with his pen knife when it was time for school to start. It was easy to get out of hearing distance. At such times no one was punished but teacher and all had a good laugh. One time the boys got inside and locked the teacher out. He promptly got a ladder and climbed to the roof and placed a board over the chimney and sat on it. Soon the boys were smoked out.

Well, the old school house is torn down now and those who played Bo and Swing are mostly gone.

"Down by the spring upon an elm,
You know I cut your name.
Some heartless wretch has peeled the bark.
'Twas dying sure but slow,
And just the one whose name you cut,
Died fifty years ago."

School opened with a song, scripture reading and sometimes prayer. Girls braided their hair and sometimes we would reach over and give their hair a jerk. To this day we recall the innocent expressions as they would turn around. While writing this we just had to stop and weep as our mind drifts back to those faces. They are now over in the church yard yonder on the hillside. Some are here and some there. A sense of loneliness comes over me that I simply cannot describe. The words come to me,

"Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight,
make me a boy again just for tonight."

Let's go to church.

I can hear Father as he drove up to the front gate and called, "We'll have to hurry. It is almost 9 o'clock." We rode two miles sitting on boards laid across the box of a dead axle wagon. There were two classes for Sunday School, one for adults and another for everyone else. The lessons were usually a chapter from the Bible. I was nearly half grown before the first organ came to our church. When it came, many of the members took their letters and left, believing that you could not worship God with anything but the human voice. (The blood of the Boston Tea Party was in their veins.)

After Sunday School the preacher arrived on horseback. He entered the pulpit like a king taking his throne. A song, prayer

and another song and they were ready for the sermon. After the sermon he would give out his next appointment and also advertise for any stock that had been lost. The sermon was usually an hour in length.

There were no bare legs and painted faces in that congregation, no jewelry and not even a flashy collar.

On one side of the pulpit there were seated some older men in what was known as the "Amen Corner". The wives on the opposite side of the room wore sunbonnets. Some of the baser men would sit in church and chew tobacco and spit on the floor. Not everything in those days was of the best. The old revival hour should not be better than the new revival hour. There were no cults in those days. Sometimes during the service the folk would get blessed while they gave their testimony. No, not everything was the best but they got around the altar and helped pray me through to God. At that altar were George and Hattie Graham. I love them yet. God finally came to me and my wife in converting power at that same altar. I was thus born again. I was born physically in a Methodist home, raised on Methodist milk and milked it myself, rocked in a Methodist cradle, fed on Methodist grub, read Methodist history, attended a Methodist church all my young life, was married by a Methodist preacher, and expect to be buried by a Methodist preacher. After that occurs, the next time you meet me will be inside the Eastern Gate.

In our home God gave us 7 children, two of whom are in the glory world as well as my companion. Our children are not God haters. I do hope they are faithful to God as I can't bear to have one of them lost.

My sun is westering. I see "a wayworn traveler in tattered garments clad. His back is heavy laden. The sweat is on his brow. Yet he is shouting as he journeys, - Deliverance will come."

We have viewed the scenery from the Allegheny mountains to the blue waters of the Pacific but even as we looked, the beauty faded. We have eaten at many well filled tables, but hunger came back again. We have drunk at wells and springs and fountains but the Lord says, "He that drinks of the water that I shall give shall never thirst."

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